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MEXICAN COMMISSION
OF
THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS
OF THE
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH
In the United States of America.

STATEMENT BY THE BISHOP OF DELAWARE, ACTING CHAIRMAN,
JANUARY, 1879.

THE Mexican Commission held a session in the City of Philadelphia, on the 15th and 16th of January, inst., at which all the members were present, with the exception of the venerable President, the Bishop of Maryland, who, to the great regret of his associates, was confined to his bed by extreme illness. The deep interest felt in the work entrusted to them was shown by the long journeys made at this inclement season by several of the Bishops in order to be present, and by many hours of earnest consideration given to the subject. Knowing that their feelings are shared by our clergy and laity to a large extent, and desiring to make the Church at large acquainted with the information they have received and the action they have taken, the Commission requested and authorized their acting chairman to make a publication relative thereto.

Some months ago a communication was sent on behalf of the Commission to Albert E. MacIntosh, Esq., Treasurer of the Mexican Church, containing a series of inquiries touching the present condition, needs, and prospects of the Church, to which answers were solicited. From the reply of that gentleman laid before the Commission, the following extracts are made :

“1. *Q.* What is the present actual condition of the Church; heretofore known as the Church of Jesus in Mexico?”

A. The Church of Jesus in Mexico has grown up into an important community of Christians, who worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. Two Dioceses have been organized, one in the vale of Mexico and the other with its centre in Cuernavaca. There are also other congregations in Nopala, State of Hidalgo, Puebla, and Vera Cruz, which form centres of Christian work. A Constitution has been formed by the clergy which will give a very strong organization to the Church, and at once establish its character throughout the country, and create unity of action in its thorough and earnest Christian work, and there is a remarkable and increased affection growing up daily for the Mexican Church among the clergy and its members, which gives great importance to the religious reformation of the people, and gives promising hopes for the future. In fact the Mexican Church, in a very conservative way, is fol-

lowing the model of the primitive Christian Church, and is keeping quite aloof from all distracting modern party questions, maintaining the unity of the faith in the bond of peace with all integrity, and the ancient canonical order.

a. Ecclesiastically, number of ministers and members ?

There are six ordained Presbyters, six ministers ought to be ordained, several other candidates for the ministry and a lay reader to each congregation. There are about 3,500 regular members, and about as many more casual members. The Rev. Dr. Riley, on his return as Bishop-elect, has given a fresh impulse to the work, and the Church of St. Francis is well attended by a regular congregation.

b. Financially. As to obligations and means of discharging them ?

The Mexican Church has always had to contend with pecuniary difficulties, as her members are poor, being chiefly artisans and country peasants. The late Mr. Theodore W. Riley, and his son, the Rev. Dr. Henry Chauncey Riley, most generously protected the Church with large sums at the commencement of the work, and the latter, after his father's death, has continued to disburse all the funds required over and above the appropriations, and disinterestedly works without a salary. This Church is now placed under the fostering care of the Foreign Committee of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, who remit about two-thirds of the monthly expenses, which are inadequate to meet the present necessities of the work. To carry out the work in an efficient manner, so as to meet the expenses of a Theological School which Dr. Riley is organizing, of free schools for boys and girls, of a good boarding-school for young ladies, and to be able to maintain the clergy with competent salaries, etc., I think a round sum of \$25,000 per annum will be required. The Mexican Church will have to depend upon foreign financial aid for many years to come, unless the Roman Catholic clergy listen to the voice of the Gospel and join this reform movement, who would probably lead on several wealthy families toward a purer religion. A man must have peace of mind in his house to be able to dedicate his whole time to study and to all the sacred duties of a clergyman, but this is impossible if he has always to be thinking how he can maintain himself and family. I consider the arrangement of the salaries of the clergy as a very important point for the future welfare of the Church, if the idea is to obtain an educated clergy who will be apt to teach all classes of society. The Rev. Dr. Riley, as Bishop-elect, has always supplied the extra amounts which have been required, but he ought to be relieved from this burden by all Christians who have the true faith at heart, as, in fact, he is now unable to do so. If \$2,000 per month can be obtained as a permanent income for some years, I think the Church of Jesus may be placed on a good footing.

c. Materially. As to the number of churches in actual possession ?

There are three churches in the capital ; the church and chapel of St. Francis, the church of St. Joseph, and one in the ex-convent of St. Anthony. Several congregations have built a house of prayer, according to the scanty means they possess.

d. Politically. As to the probable continuance of Government protection ?

At present all Protestants are protected by the laws of the country, and the authorities behave with a tolerant spirit, nevertheless there are some few exceptions. If the liberal party is wise enough to unite, and holds its ground as hitherto, the Mexican Church has nothing to fear. The reform laws have separated the Church entirely from the State, and each denomination can establish its own rules and regu-

lations, with the right to appeal to the chief authorities for protection whenever they need it.

e. Socially. As to the standing of the Church in the community, compared with the Romish, and other Protestant bodies, and the mass of irreligious men?

The Mexican Church, socially speaking, is of course still in a small minority as regards the 9,000,000 nominal Roman Catholics, who hold their ground most tenaciously; but as regards other Protestant bodies the Church of Jesus has a decided majority of members. The people are nominally Roman Catholics, but indifference, infidelity and spiritualism are increasing to an alarming extent, and are sadly corrupting Mexican society. The organization of the Church of Jesus is more suited to the country than the other denominations, which appear more like secular public assemblies without ceremonies, and perhaps this may be the reason why the Latin race adheres so firmly to the Roman Catholic Church in Italy, Spain and Spanish America, and even in France, where Protestantism makes such slow progress. A keen observer must soon find out that the sectarian spirit which has thwarted the progress of the Mexican Church from its infancy has prevented many Romanists from becoming Protestants. The Latin race requires liturgical worship, combined with artistical and architectural taste in the church buildings, and good music and singing.

We must always bear in mind that we are endeavoring to reform a Church which has held its sway in Mexico for more than three hundred years, and no rapid progress can ensue until the clergy put themselves at the head of the movement, as did the Reformers of old in England. Nevertheless, the Mexican branch of the Church has done wonders, considering the fanaticism and opposition it has to contend with on all sides.

f. Spiritually. As a living body, composed of members walking in and with Christ?

The Bible and Prayer-Book are penetrating gradually into Mexican homes, and there is a decided spiritual regeneration silently going on. As soon as all the members of a family firmly adhere to the Church, a complete change comes over them; but when only one of the members leaves the errors of Rome, then he or she, as it may be, has to undergo all manner of trials and cruel persecutions. There are too many of such cases to relate, which would make this answer too long. The faith has been so engrafted in the souls of the members of the Church that many have died a martyr's death, without any retaliation whatever on the part of the surviving relatives, who pray on in love for their enemies. The poorer classes which form the majority of this Church become more charitable and spiritually reformed in their manners and customs, leaving that low and unbecoming language which is so prevalent in Mexico; and, in fact, it can be stated that the Mexican Church is gradually obtaining the spiritual regeneration of many of the people, which even the Roman clergy are feeling.

2. *Q.* What statistics can you furnish?

A. As already stated, there are three churches in the capital, which must have cost in their time at least a million dollars. There are about 3,500 regular members, two Sunday-schools, and six free schools in the Diocese of Mexico, and three in the State of Morelos, containing in all more than five hundred children; a printing press, which publishes the periodical, called *The Truth*, every week.

Letters of subsequent dates inform us that a General Constitution of the Church has been adopted; that its Synods are organized and working efficiently; that the designation of Dr. Riley's Episcopal charge had been changed to the Valley of Mexico; that of the Rev. P. Hernandez is Cuernavaca, and that the Rev. Thomas Valdespino had been elected Bishop of the City of Mexico. We are also informed that the repairs of the great Church of San Francisco are going onward, and inasmuch as one of the conditions of subscriptions to the expense of these repairs was that Dr. Riley should personally superintend the work and open the church, he had been obliged to remain longer than he anticipated when he left the United States. Mr. MacIntosh thus concludes his last letter, dated December 28, 1878: "In view of the grand work that the Lord is enabling us to do here, and the difficulties which surround it, it should not be wondered at that we do not press forward everything at once; and we may congratulate ourselves that in no other Roman Catholic country such important results have been obtained in so short a time, on behalf of the Gospel, as in this Republic."

The Commission adopted the following resolutions :

1. That this Commission has learned with the deepest interest from information furnished and publications laid before us by A. E. MacIntosh, Esq., Treasurer, etc., that a Constitution has been adopted, and that other important measures have been taken by the Mexican branch of the Catholic Church militant for the complete organization of the same, in agreement with the specifications of the Covenant, and that official documents in confirmation of these measures will soon be forwarded by the General Synod of said Church.

2. That this Commission, awaiting such documentary information, earnestly request the General Synod, with other documents, to present, first of all, copies of the requisite offices for the Holy Communion and for Holy Baptism; and, second, the testimonials heretofore agreed upon of the election or designation of Bishops, confirmed by notarial authentication.

3. That we shall be gratified to receive a copy of the Constitution of the Mexican Branch of the Catholic Church Militant, authenticated in a similar manner.

4. That our chairman is requested to communicate these resolutions, with such remarks as he may think proper to add, to the Rev. Dr. Riley, to the General Synod, through Rev. Senor Perez, its Secretary, and to Mr. MacIntosh, Treasurer, and any other members of the Mexican Church.

5. That this Commission, in a deep sense of its great responsibilities, will endeavor to be instant in prayer in behalf of the persecuted Church in Mexico and its Bishops-elect; at the same time asking for prayers in behalf of our own Church, that it may not be found wanting in extending sympathy and requisite succor to a sister Church in its present condition of suffering and necessities.

The above is given to the Church by direction of the Mexican Commission.

WILMINGTON, Del., Jan. 20, 1879.

ALFRED LEE.

CONTRIBUTIONS—*whether large or small—are earnestly solicited, and may be sent to* GEORGE A. BROWN, ESQ., GENERAL TREASURER in ENGLAND for "THE LEAGUE in aid of the MEXICAN BRANCH of the CHURCH," care of Messrs. BROWN, SHIPLEY & CO., Liverpool, England.

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